I Might be pardoned for singing the praises & the perfection of the said Compass and Rule, but I will leave it for some other more studious than I am, to pass the time in so doing. In this place I shall say nothing more, except that no man will ever write well in Attic or any other letter, without Compass or without Rule; and that in all things that lack due proportion, which depends upon Compass and Rule, there is neither order nor good sense. Wherefore, then, O noble lords and devoted lovers of Learning, love the Compass & the Rule, diverting yourselves therewith & exercising yourselves in their use, in order to learn the reason and the truth of all excellent things. The Italians, who are supreme in Perspective, Painting, and Image-making, have always in their hands the Compass & the Rule; therefore they are the most perfect in all Christendom in working with the graver, in representing nature, and in fitly portraying light and shade. They have in addition this charm, that they are cool & studious, moderate in drinking and eating & speaking heedlessly, and not inclined to go too much into company, by which means they learn better and more surely, and acquire reputation, which they regard as no small matter. We have not so many fine qualities in this sort as they have, & so we find no one on this side of the mountains to be compared to the late Messire Leonardo da Vinci, or Donatello, or Raphael of Urbino, or Michelangelo. I do not mean to say that there are no great and good minds among us, but that there is lack of use of the Compass and the Rule.

I Return to my A, made with the compass and a rule, and beg those who read this little work not to think that I have thus excogitated it and drawn it to make a puzzle of it, and to make them sweat over it, but rather to counsel them with words of good sense, and to show them by touch and sight that the true Attic letter must necessarily, as I have said, be made with the rule and the compass.

BEfore I go on to describe and draw the second letter in alphabetical order, which is B, I would say here, in conclusion, as I have already said, that A, if it be made according to art, must have its right leg as thick as the tenth part of its height, which is the breadth of one of the ten units contained between the eleven equidistant lines drawn in its square, and not as thick as the ninth part of its height, as Frere Lucas Paciolus of Bourg Sainct-Sepulchre says in the *Diuina proportione* which

he says that he wrote. His own words in vulgar Italian are as follows: *Questa letera A si caua del tondo, e del suo quadro. La gamba da man drita vol esser grossa de la noue parti luna de lalteza.** That is to say: 'This letter A is partly rounded and partly square. The right leg must be as thick as one of nine parts of its height.' He divides his square into only nine parts & gives no reason therefor; wherefore, under correction, it seems to me that he speaks ignorantly, going astray with the very first letter, & so with all the rest. I have been told that all that he did in this matter he took secretly from the late Messire Leonardo da Vinci, who was a great mathematician, painter, and image-maker. Sigismund Fante,† a nobleman of Ferrara, who, as I have said, strives to teach how to make divers sorts of letters, gives no reasons for the proportions of his said letters, especially for the Antique letter. He, too, has gone astray in the A, the E, the L, the Q, the S, the T, and the X, which are not made as they should be, either in dimensions or in shape. The keen eye of the learned & studious man will be able easily to perceive this in the book which the said Sigismund has printed, entitled *Thesauro de Scrittori.*

* *See Note* 26.

† *See Note* 27.

I Have divided my square into ten parts, which I call units, contained between eleven perpendicular and as many horizontal lines; and I gave my reasons for so doing in the Second Book, in several passages, when I was speaking of the nine Muses, & Apollo, who makes the tenth. Whether I have said well or no, I leave to good students and philosophers, both naturalist and poetic. I do not mean to place myself before the Italians, but I have said thereon what seems to me apt to incite alert minds to do better, if such is their pleasure and if they can. In addition to all that I have said, observe that for the rounded corners of the legs both at the top and at the base, and for the curved parts of the letters, I make a sign like this, +, to show where the fixed point of the compass must be placed to make the said corners and curves, as well within as outside the letters, as I have done in the first A in this Third Book, which has one at the top & four by the two feet. The aforementioned Paciolus says no word of this, nor does any other author whom I have ever seen or heard of. When hereafter I shall say, 'This letter is made with this or that number of centres,' it will mean that it will be necessary so many times to use the compass to draw an interior or exterior circle coinciding with and joined to the straight or broken lines which it may haply be necessary to make.